**Freight rail corridors**

3221. SHRI ANAND SHARMA: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to set up dedicated freight rail corridors to connect ports with the hinterland;

(b) if so, the details of the proposed policy and target year of completion; and

(c) the other steps proposed for the revamp of the maritime sector?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) Setting up of National Dedicated Freight Rail Corridor from the hinterland of Northern part of India to Southern part of India which would be linked with the various ports is envisaged in the draft policy for the Maritime Sector (Ports, Merchant Shipping and Inland Water Transport). The draft policy further envisages that the corridor would be operated in the private sector and would have its own rolling stock, locomotives, signaling system, stations etc. but will follow the standards laid down by the Railways. The policy would need the approval of the competent authority.

(c) There is no proposal for revamping the maritime sector *per se.* However, development and modernization of the maritime sector, which includes Ports, Merchant Shipping and Inland Water Transport (IWT), are undertaken as part of the on-going process, to cope with the demands of maritime trade. During the Tenth Five Year Plan period, an amount of Rs. 14220 Crores has been allocated for development of the maritime sector. Apart from the above, an investment of Rs. 11257 Crores by the private sector is also envisaged in major ports during the Tenth Plan period. Various measures aimed at creation of additional cargo handling capacities in the ports to reduce waiting time for ships calling at these ports, deepening of channels to facilitate berthing If large size vessels, improving road and rail connectivity to hinterland, augmentation of the shipping fleet, promotion of coastal shipping, modernization of navigational aids, encouragement of Indian ship building industry to make it globally competitive, development of inland water transport infrastructure so as to increase the share of inland cargo movement etc. have been/are being undertaken.